## Remarks

This amendment is responsive to the Office Action dated 22-Sept-03. A request for a two-month extension of time accompanies this paper.

By the above amendment to claim 1, the invention is more particularly pointed out and distinctly claimed by specifying that the nonwoven web is previously pattern bonded creating interfiber bonds. Support for this amendment may be found in Applicants' specification, for example, at page 16, line 31 through page 17, line 3. The above amendment also corrects an inadvertent error in the specification. Reconsideration of the application in light of the amendments and the arguments below is respectfully requested.

The Examiner's thorough and detailed examination of this case is noted with appreciation. Claims 1, 4, 5, 10, 13, 18 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Varona USP 6,150,002 ("Varona"). Citing Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987) MPEP 2131 provides "A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference. An anticipating reference must describe the [patented] subject matter with sufficient clarity and detail to establish that the subject matter existed in the prior art and that such existence would be recognized by persons of ordinary skill in the field of the invention. [Citations omitted.] Crown Operations International, Ltd. v. Solutia Inc. CAFC 289 F.3d 1367 (2002). Anticipation by inherent disclosure is appropriate only when the reference discloses prior art that must necessarily include the unstated limitations. [Citation omitted.] [Emphasis in original.] Transclean Corporation v. Bridgewood Services, Inc. 2002 WL 1012878, -- F.3d – (2002).

The present invention as defined by claim 1 calls for creping a thermoplastic fiber web in a process using a hot melt adhesive to adhere the web to a creping roll, and where the web contains a pattern of interfiber bonds prior to creping. The process provides major advantages in avoiding a drying step used in prior creping processes and the cost and detrimental effects on the web that drying entails. While the claims of Varona are not limited in this regard, Varona contains no teaching leading to the use of a hot melt adhesive, and the examples, as well as several dependent claims, describe the use of latex adhesives. Further, the process FIG. 1 clearly illustrates use of a dryer drum 36. Since the use of a hot melt adhesive is a key lement of Applicants' claim 1 and essential to the beneficial results of the invention, this rejection of claim 1, particularly as amended, and claims dependent thereon is respectfully believed to be in error, and withdrawal is requested.

Claims 18 and 19 require creping of a an adhesive nonwoven web of fibers comprising a thermoplastic polymer and an adhesive additive. As Varona is silent regarding addition of adhesive additives to the fibers of a nonwoven web to produce an adhesive web, it is respectfully submitted that Varona cannot anticipate claims 18 and 19 in the sense of 35 U.S.C. 102(b). It is noted that claim 18 is not specifically addressed in the detailed explanation of the Examiner's rejection. Withdrawal of this rejection, accordingly, is also respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4, 5, 8, 9-12, 14, 15, and 18-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as anticipated by USP 6,315,864 to Anderson et al. ("Anderson"). This reference is directed to a hydroneedled fibrous web with a swirled fiber structure that has an adhesive applied and is creped. While the Anderson claims are not all limited in this regard, the webs of the examples comprise pulp and or staple fibers and paper-like webs are formed using wetlaying and hydroneedling steps. The process of the FIG. 1 clearly contemplates use of a dryer 32. Although Anderson mention the possible use of hot melt adhesives to alleviate drying, preferred embodiments use latex adhesives, and there would be no real incentive to use a hot melt adhesive in a hydroneedling and wetlaying process that would require drying in any event. In addition, claim 1 as presently amended requires a web with a pattern of inter-fiber thermoplastic fiber bonds that is not taught in Anderson. Therefore, this rejection is believed to have been overcome, and withdrawal is respectfully requested as to claim 1 and claims dependent thereon.

As applied to claims 18-24, the rejection is believed to be in error as Anderson lacks any teaching with respect to creping of an adhesive web of fibers containing an adhesive additive. As with the prior rejection, the Examiner's detailed rejection does not address claim 18. Withdrawal of this rejection is also respectfully requested.

Claims 2 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over either Varona or Anderson, separately, each taken with USP 4,158,594 to Becker et al. ("Becker") which is relied upon to teach application of a creping adhesive to either the roll or the web. Becker is directed to creping of cellulose fiber webs with a bonding material adhered to one side of the web. For all the reasons discussed with respect to the anticipation rejections, it is believed that claims 2 and 3 are not obvious in the sense of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) in light of these combinations of references because Becker would not be considered by one of skill with the primary references and, even if considered, would not lead to the invention including the limitations of claim 1. It is request d that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 6 and 7 stand separately rej ct d as unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Varona or Anderson with the temperature selection considered obvious in order to apply a hot melt adhesive as a melt. Without admission that the specific limitations are taught by Varona or Anderson, claims 6 and 7 are believed patentable for all the reasons argued in favor of the claim 1 from which they depend. Withdrawal of these rejections are requested.

Claims 17 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Anderson with heating of the second roll considered an obvious matter of choice taught by Anderson to improve attachment of the web to the drum surface. Without conceding the Examiner's argument, claims 17 and 25 are believed patentable for all the reasons argued in favor of claim 1 and claim 18 from which they, respectively, depend.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Such favorable action is respectfully solicited.

The undersigned may be reached at 770-587-8096.

Respectfully submitted,

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